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National
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Human Rights Performance: January 1977–July 1978

A Research Paper

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FOREWORD

This assessment of the human rights performance of foreign countries over the past year and a half, requested by the DCI, is in two parts. The first is an overview of worldwide trends, which emphasizes the degree to which there has been change in the practices of foreign countries since 1976. This is followed by regional sections, which attempt to place foreign practices and indications of change into the context both of the countries' history and political culture and of their relations with the United States.

For the purposes of this paper we have identified "human rights" as including governmental unwillingness to condone (1) torture; (2) cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; (3) arbitrary arrest or imprisonment; (4) denial of fair public trial; (5) invasion of the home. They also connote governmental respect for freedom of (6) thought, speech, press, religion, and assembly; (7) movement within the country, foreign travel, and emigration; and (8) participation in the political process. Finally (9) they imply a government's willingness to tolerate international and nongovernmental investigation of alleged violations of human rights. We have not included evaluations of economic performances within the scope of this paper, although we recognize that there is an economic dimension to the term human rights as it is commonly used. Only independent foreign countries with more than 175,000 inhabitants have been evaluated; Turkish-controlled Cyprus and Israeli-occupied territories have been counted as separate countries. Excluding the United States, our evaluation covers all but 0.2 percent of the world's population; that is, about 9 million people. Population data for all countries are estimates as of 1 January 1978, a point between the beginning and end dates—January 1977 and July 1978—of our assessments of human rights performance. Thus our data do not show the increase of the world's population between those two dates.

Regarding ratings, we judge *generally good* those countries with endemic problems in no more than one or two areas of human rights; as *spotty* those with problems in several areas; and as *poor* those with problems in all or nearly all areas.

The views expressed in this paper represent the best judgments of ORPA analysts as of 31 July 1978 and have not been coordinated with other components of the Agency. We are aware that, for many countries, assessing the state of human rights practices, and even the direction they are taking, is both complex and controversial. It is extremely difficult to place 100 or so countries into a few categories to the satisfaction of ORPA analysts, let alone observers elsewhere. Some changes for the better that we describe may not be

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Central Intelligence Agency
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Overview

Over the last year and a half, we believe, the human rights situation worldwide has, on balance, improved, but in several countries has deteriorated. We see this improvement reflected in two ways: first according to the rating (either *generally good*, *spotty*, or *poor*) the various countries occupied in July 1978 compared to January 1977; secondly according to the direction (improvement, no change, regression) they have taken during this period regardless of rating.

As to rating, we find 47 countries in the *generally good* category as of July 1978 compared to 44 in January 1977. India, Spain, and Thailand moved up from the *spotty* category; that is, we judged that these countries had endemic problems in only one or two areas of human rights as of July 1978, but in several areas 18 months previously. In terms of population, the improvement was much more dramatic than the numbers of countries involved would suggest: from less than 700 million people in January 1977 to more than 1.4 billion—nearly a third of the world's population in July 1978.

The decline in the *spotty* category during the same period was from 78 countries with about 1.8 billion people in January 1977 to 74 countries with about a billion people in July 1978. The change in the *spotty* category reflects not only the movement up to *generally good* by India, Spain, and Thailand but Afghanistan's movement down from *spotty* to *poor*.

The countries in the *poor* category, that is, with problems in all or nearly all areas of human rights, numbered 25 with a population of about 1.56 billion in January 1977 and 26 containing about 1.58 billion in July 1978.

Table 1 [1] below summarizes the comparative ratings for July 1978 and January 1977. See also figure 1 for the rating of each country as of July 1978.

In terms of the direction countries have taken since January 1977 we see more significant patterns of change, both upward and downward, than the

[1] See the appendix for a more detailed listing of the information contained in the figures and tables in this paper.

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On the other hand, countries in the *spotty-and-unchanged* category, for example in Latin America and the Middle East, usually at least offer explanations for their resistance to change. They plead parlous security conditions, and emphasize, among other things, the increasing tendency of indigenous terrorist groups to use human rights rhetoric to serve terrorist goals. Economic and social circumstances are invoked in a variety of ways to excuse inattention to political and civil rights. For example, countries with low standards of living maintain that political freedoms are simply not of urgent priority. Recipients of economic aid express pointed resentment against attempts to link human rights to the loan policies of international financial institutions. Newly acquired economic prosperity, notably in some Moslem oil-producing countries, has reinforced an already strong cultural bias against Western human rights concepts. Other countries frankly fear the social turmoil they perceive to be an inherent part of Western liberal democracies.

The table below summarizes the direction (improvement, regression, no change) taken by foreign countries since January 1977, and the ratings (generally good, spotty, poor) occupied by those countries by July 1978. In all but four cases—India, Spain, Thailand, and Afghanistan—the ratings were the same as in January 1977. See also figure 2.

As the regional sections that follow indicate, the causes both of the prevailing climate of human rights practices in individual countries and of the changes that have occurred recently are often exceedingly complex, especially in regard to the relative importance of the internal and the external factors. By and large, increased US attention to human rights practices has contrib-

Table 2

Human Rights Performance Since January 1977

	Rating as of July 1978	Countries	Population (Million Persons)
Improvement			
	Generally Good	3	731
	Spotty	35	715
	Poor	3	987
Total		**41**	**2,433**
Regression			
	Generally Good	0	
	Spotty	2	2
	Poor	8	382
Total		**10**	**384**
No Change			
	Generally Good	42	660
	Spotty	37	329
	Poor	17	217
Total		**96**	**1,206**

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In *Argentina* the human rights issue continues to cause strains with the United States. Senior Argentine officials view human rights abuses as an unfortunate but inevitable consequence of intense efforts to eradicate leftist terrorism, and under these circumstances resent efforts by foreign critics to portray the Argentine Government as an oppressive dictatorship. Now that the terrorist threat seems to be abating, the government is attempting to wind down its massive security operations and to exercise tighter controls over police and military units. It has ordered release of many prisoners to their relatives during daylight hours. The Interior Minister recently warned police chiefs to stop bullying the public and to restore normal procedures, and the government has strengthened requirements for proper police identification. In an effort to appease its critics, the government has published several lists of those arrested and under detention and is making a more concerted effort to locate missing persons. Nevertheless, thousands of prisoners are still being held under state of siege provisions which deny them benefits of trial and due process. The fact that there are still occasional reports of disappearances, torture, and death indicates that the government is either unable or unwilling to bring all elements of the security forces under full control.

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